

## SALMI MORSE.

The *Wasp* gives an obituary notice of Salmi Morse, of "Passion Play" notoriety, in the following words:—"In the suicide of Salmi Morse we have a beautiful reminder that we live (as he preferred not to do) in an age of very particularly civil and most consummately religious liberty. Mr. Morse, never much of a genius, and always something of a crank, entered in his latter days upon a course of hard lying—a habit contracted doubtless, while editing this paper ever so many years ago, before it became distinguished as a compendium of all truth. We feel bound to make this prefatory statement, lest in what we are about to say we be thought partial to his memory. He was a man of ill-balanced mind, ill-regulated life; is altogether better out of the world than in it. All the same his suicide was a murder, and civil and religious liberty is caught red-handed near the spot. Never was so harmless a man subjected to so mean a persecution. What he attempted to do—what it became the one purpose of his existence to do, and what, with the superb folly of a man with a mission, he staked his life upon accomplishing, no man in this country (of civil and religious liberty) had any kind or degree of right to prohibit or obstruct. Yet the churches and the parsons, the judges, the politicians, the women, and the truly good of both sexes and of neither depressed their noses to his trail, uncovered their teeth, hunted him from every cover snatched at him in all his doings, and when finally, with reeling brain and bursting heart, the poor devil lay down and died of exhaustion, trotted contentedly to the sanctimonious full of edifying reflections on the impiety of suicide and the wickedness of sin generally. Had Salmi Morse written a drama having for the central figure Buddha, Brahma or Mahomet, the courts would have protected him in its representation when and where he chose, against the protest of every Buddhist, Brahmin or Mahomedan in the country, even if the play had been a farce, and the principal character a clown. You see, good reader, how wise it is constantly to repeat that in this country there is no State Church, and no God in the Constitution. The statement is indisputable, and has the further merit of irrelevancy that is matchless. Let it be inscribed on the star-spangled banner in the blood of Salmi Morse."

## ANTI-OPIUM MISSTATEMENTS.

The Hongkong *Daily Press* says that the Anti-Opium Society, undismayed by failure, undaunted by exposure of its fallacies, continues its campaign, and bolstered up its case with a surprising amount of misstatements. At a meeting held at Dundee recently, the Provost, who presided, asked "What was the cause of our first war with China—a war which entailed enormous losses of men, money, and territory on the Chinese and which brought disgrace on the British flag?" He gives the answer to the question as follows:—"It was not so much to compel her to open her ports for linen, and cotton, and such like goods, as to secure the admission of opium." Nothing could be farther from the truth than this rash and ignorant assertion. Let us in charity hope the Provost was unaware of the inaccuracy of his statement, but even so a grave responsibility rests upon him for making such an misleading assertion without taking more pains to ascertain whether it was true or not. When the first war with China was undertaken the British Government had no wish to force opium on China and hostilities were brought about solely by the insults and injuries inflicted on British subjects by the Chinese Government, and their refusal to carry on diplomatic relations on anything like a civilized basis. Captain Elliott, the Superintendent of Trade at the time the events happened which led up to the war, was an avowed opponent of the opium traffic, and in one of his dispatches to Lord Palmerston he thus expressed himself:—"If my private feelings were of the least consequence upon questions of a public and important nature, assuredly I might justly say, that no man entertains a deeper detestation of the disgrace and sin of this forced traffic on the coast of China than the humble individual who signs this dispatch. I see little to choose between it and piracy; and in my place, as a public officer, I have disengaged myself by all the lawful means in my power, and at the total sacrifice of my private comfort in the society in which I have lived for some years past." But, he goes on to say, "whilst I have endeavored to fulfil my duty to Her Majesty's Government in the public course of repression I have pursued, it did not consist with my station to sanction measures of force to recognize evidences of the ex-

istence of one Great, all-controlling, wise Mind?" We shall publish Sir Edmund Beckett's lecture in full in our weekly issue, and commend it to the perusal of all who take an interest in such things. With the lecturer's views we are not wholly in accord but we reserve our comments on his able address until the latter has been placed before our readers in its entirety.

## THE MERSEY TUNNEL.

The boring of the Mersey tunnel was successfully completed on January 17th, thereby direct communication under the bed of the river established between Liverpool and Birkenhead. The event is the consummation of one of the most important engineering works yet carried out in Great Britain. The tunnel under the Severn, which is being made by the Great Western Railway, exceeds the Mersey tunnel in length, but the latter is at present the longest roadway under a tidal river. The tunnel has been driven through the red sandstone, and is about thirty feet under the bed of the estuary. It has been worked from both ends, and the driftway, which was completed last week, has still to be excavated to the full dimensions of the tunnel. The Boulton boring machine, by whose aid the work has been done, marks the great progress made since Brunel. The latter had, of course, a very different soil to start with; but the length of the Thames tunnel is only 1300 feet, whereas that of the Mersey tunnel is nearly three times the length or 1230 yards. It is expected that railway communication between Liverpool and Birkenhead will be established in about eighteen months.—*Manufactures' Gazette*.

## GORDON'S ESCAPE.

"It is not generally known," says the *St. James Gazette*, "that General Gordon very narrowly escaped death by drowning on his way from Palestine to Brussels. When he received the summons of the King of the Belgians he set out with characteristic promptness in a boat from Palestine to Port Said. The weather became rough, the boat was driven a hundred miles out of her course, and General Gordon had a very narrow escape from sudden death. He reached Port Said, however, in safety. When he came to England he had no idea that the Government would send him to the Sudan. He had never even been consulted by the Ministers, and the utmost favor he expected at their hands was permission to go to the Congo. Even this at one time seemed likely to be denied him, when suddenly, in deference to the unmistakable demands of the whole country, the Government dispatched their ablest officer to pacify the Sudan. That is the simplest truth, and the best thing that could happen now would be for the Mahdi to cut the telegraph wires as soon as General Gordon gets to Khartoum, so that the latter may be left free to act as the circumstances demand without being hampered by instructions either from Cairo or from London."

## HOW DID THE WORLD EVOLVE ITSELF?

A large meeting was held by the Victoria Philosophical Institute of London—a Society, founded to investigate all scientific questions, especially any said to militate against the truth of the Bible—on Monday, January 21, to hear an address from Sir Edmund Beckett, Bart., Queen's Counsel. In it he, as a scientific man, described, in popular language, the laws of nature, reviewing the steps in the progress of scientific research recently made in various countries, and showing how they bore on the question: Is all creation, in its perfect arrangement, its beauty and grandeur, self-evolved, as some assert; or are we not compelled, after patient investigation of its many departments, to confess that there is something beyond, which we are with my station to sanction measures of force to recognize evidences of the ex-

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## THE STORY-TELLER.

## Mr. Bird's Best Umbrella

BY F. W. ROBINSON.

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(Continued.)

I caught cold last night.

'Not—not at that window?'

'Yes, at that window.'

'Oh, come, I am awfully sorry for that,' Mr. Bird cried, 'I didn't think of that. I thought some gentleman, or servant, or porter might be up, for there was a light burning over the half door, and it wouldnt be a great deal of trouble and save my getting wet through. Why, I would much rather have lost my umbrella all together than have given *you* cold, although it's an umbrella which I would not take twenty pounds for—no, nor fifty pounds either.'

'Is it a very valuable umbrella?'

'Oh no, not at all; but as you know now, it's my best umbrella in every sense of the word,' he said, laughing, 'my very best umbrella, don't you see!'

But I did not see; neither the application nor the umbrella was apparent to me, and my heart quite sank at the news which I had to impart to him. The man was so enwrapped in his umbrella—speaking figuratively—that I felt it was necessary to break the news gently.

'I'm sorry to say I don't see,' I replied, 'for the fact is—'

'Yes, he was impulsive, and dashed to conclusions; and the smile did leave his face as suddenly and completely as if somebody had pulled it away by a string, and a settled look of horror, and for an instant open-mouthed idiocy, took its place.

'The fact is—' he repeated, very slowly at last; 'go on, please.'

'That there was no umbrella down our area at all.'

'Oh! that won't do,' he exclaimed, so abruptly and rudely that I felt the color coming up all over me, that won't do at any price.'

'I don't know what you mean by any price, sir, I said, drawing myself up to my full height, as the novelists say—and that height was nearly five feet three inches and a half when fully drawn and a little bit on tiptoe—but you must take my word, sir, that I haven't set eyes on your umbrella.'

'No, Miss Neild, I don't suppose you have,' he said very quickly; 'don't think that I think that you think—that—that—why of course I don't,' he said, tumbling into another sentence as the first one became hopelessly involved, 'and it's not at all likely; but it went down your area—I was perfectly sober—and the servant must have seen it in the morning. May I ask the servants?'

'I have asked them.'

'Isn't there a page-boy, or somebody who comes early to clean something?'

'No.'

'Who is the first to go into that area in the morning, Miss Neild?' he enquired, 'somebody for coals I suppose.'

'Bridget or Sarah, certainly.'

'I should very much like to see Bridget and Sarah, he suggested, if you would not object.'

'You must be content with my word, sir, that your umbrella is not on the premises.' I said, still firmly; 'I cannot have my servants subjected to a cross-examination on this question. I have already made every enquiry.'

'And they tell you that they have not seen my umbrella?'

'They do.'

'And you believe them?'

'Certainly.'

'Well I don't—and that's plain speaking,' he said frankly.

'I'm aware of that.'

'Because, you see, it is quite impossible unless there's anybody else in the house, who gets up earlier than the servants. Is there anybody else?' he asked.

'Yes, there's a gentleman who lodges in my front parlor, who leaves very early but—'

'That's the man. Where is he?' cried Mr. Bird, with a frantic dash in a new direction of suspicion, 'I should like to see him.'

'He's a gentleman holding a high position on the railway, and is not at all likely to confiscate property that does not belong to him,' I said.

'I don't say he has confiscated it,' answered Mr. Bird, less brusquely, 'but he may have seen it this morning, and put aside for further inquiries.'

'Mr. Goode, is not in the habit of going into my area,' I said; 'I don't believe he has been in the area in the whole course of his life.'

'Not before this morning Miss Neild—very likely not, having nothing to go for, as it were. But when he caught sight of an umbrella—and a very peculiar umbrella—lying on the wet stones, I haven't the slightest doubt—'

'He could not get into the area, sir,' I said; 'Bridget takes up the key with her every night, and besides, I told him about the umbrella this morning.'

'What did he say to that?'

'He said it was like your impertinence—"confounded impertinence," I may say, were the actual words used,' I answered, 'to make such a noise in the middle of the night, and he should like to give you a piece of his mind.'

'Oh, he said that did he!' he remarked, biting his finger nails almost savagely.

'Yes.'

'Then he's the man who's got my umbrella,' he cried; 'he's keeping it back out of spite!'

'Mr. Bird, this is absolutely unbearable.'

'I suppose he was the fellow bellowing about the house like a bull last night, trying to make somebody understand that I was knocking. I heard him.'

'No, he was not the fellow,' I replied, severely; 'that was Captain Choppers.'

'Does Captain Choppers get up early?'

'No, he doesn't, he's a very late riser indeed; I believe he's in bed now.'

'That's his artfulness,' said the suspicious individual, just to make you fancy—'

'But I could not allow him to proceed any further. I was fairly roused by this stranger's disparaging reflections. I rose, looked steadily and gravely at him, and said—'

'This interview is at an end, Mr. Bird. These gentlemen are my lodgers—I might say almost friends—and I cannot listen to your cruel and un-called-for remarks against their common honesty.'

'Common honesty it may be, Miss Neild,' he replied, 'but you must allow there is very unconscionable dishonesty somewhere in your establishment.'

'I will allow nothing.'

'I don't mean I want you to allow me anything for the loss of my umbrella,' he said hurriedly. 'Pray don't understand that to be my wish.'

'Of course not. The idea'